

# KING COTTON IN ASIA

By FRANK G. CARPENTER

## BIG MILLS AT SHANGHAI WHICH WORK BOYS AT 4 CENTS A DAY.

A Walk Through a Big Cotton Factory—An Enormous Market Which the United States Might Supply—American Coal Oil, and How It Is Handled—What Our Tobacco Trust Is Doing—The Strike of the Cigarette Girls Against Wearing Collars—The Boycott, and President Roosevelt's Lost Chance.

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Shanghai.

The growth of Shanghai beats that of the gourd of Jonah, which sprang up in a night. It is now a modern European city. It has business blocks which might be dropped down in New York or London and not be out of place, and residences which would be fine in Washington or Paris. Along the Bund, the wide road, which faces the river, are a dozen or more banks whose capital runs into the tens of millions and whose managers are so trusted that they can dip into the pockets of nations and draw out at pleasure. On the same street are club houses, some of which have cost hundreds of thousands of dollars to build. There are big hotels where you can



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live as well as at home, and shops with plate glass windows, containing European goods of every description. Shanghai is the Paris of the far East. It is one of the richest cities of Asia, and it takes the best of all that is going.

### In the Big Cotton Mills.

Shanghai is preparing to manufacture for the new China. It is putting up factories and foundries, and starting all sorts of new industries. It has silk filatures which are producing bales of raw silk for our American weavers, modern flour mills equipped with Milwaukee machinery, and a cigarette factory which employs more than 1,000 hands. It has eight great cotton mills with several hundred thousand spindles and some which have 80,000 or 90,000 spindles in a single establishment. In these mills over 300,000 Chinese men, women and

children are employed, and they are spinning and weaving cotton quite as well as any of our American factories. The most of them are managed by Chinese foremen and they give some idea of how the Celestials expect to make their own cloth in the future.

During my stay here I have visited some of the biggest of the cotton factories. I went through the establishment of the Soy Chee Cotton Spinning Company today. It lies on the Whampoa river, the branch of the Yangtze which gives Shanghai access to the sea, and it is so situated that the bales can be landed right at the mills and the goods shipped thousands of miles into the interior by means of the rivers, or to Japan or the United States. The suburb, connected with it is known as Honkew. This is the great factory center, and its smokestacks dot the stream, running along the banks almost to the Yangtze.

### Child Labor at 4 Cents Per Day.

The buildings of the Soy Chee Company cover several acres. They are of gray brick and are shadowed by a smokestack which rises to the height of a twelve-story flat. Entering them, I found over a thousand men, women and children at work. I went through a room after room filled with girls who were weaving and spinning, and I saw 200 children tending the machines. Some of them were little tots not higher than my waist and many did not reach to my shoulders. The smaller children were pulling baskets filled with bobbins here and there about the rooms. The larger ones were tending the spinning mules and all were working so hard that they scarcely looked up as I entered.

I asked as to their wages, and found they they were about 4 of our cents per day, and that the pay of the older hands ranged from that to 20 cents. Think of working ten hours for 4 cents; and that in the dust of a spinning mill! I photographed some of the children, frightening the little ones almost to death as I did. The manager tells me that he has many whole families employed in his factory—father, mother and children, all working. There are no laws against child labor, and the babies aid in keeping the wolf from the door.

Speaking of babies, there were several of these in the mill. Some were still at the breast, and their mothers had brought them along that they might not lose work. I remember one girl spinning away with an almond-eyed infant on her knees, and another had a baby in a basket beside her. The child was quiet. As I chuckled it under the chin two yellow dimples broke out in its cheeks and it smiled. In another place I saw a three-months' old baby lying in a pile of white cotton waste on the floor of the mill.

### Cotton Yarn for Hand Looms.

This factory works day and night, and there are quite as many children employed in the night shift as in the day time. One thousand hands are always busy. Sunday and week days, all the year through. Its chief product is cotton yarn for domestic weavers. This is made up into bundles, which are then packed into bales of 400 pounds each, and shipped all over the country. The yarn is woven into cloth on hand looms, and it supplies a large part of the clothing of the common people. It comes into competition with the mills of India and Japan, and also with those which are now starting up in other parts of



Chinese Child Labor. Much of the Work in the Cotton Mills is Done by Children at 4 Cents a Day.

China. I am told there are something like 300,000 now working upon such yarn at Shanghai and Soochow. There is one big mill at Hangchow, one at Canton, and some at Hongkong, Wuchang and Hankow. The labor is abundant and the people easily learn to handle the modern machinery.

### New Milling Machinery.

The Chinese are rapidly introducing the better class of machines, and their mills are already about as well equipped as our own. A great part of their machinery is imported from England, and only certain specialties come from the United States. In one factory I found an American light plant with 6,000 electric lamps burning, and in another there were modern fire machines, and the employees had a fire drill every week. In nearly every place the wages were as low or lower than those I have quoted, the highest price paid the men being something like 30 cents per day, while a good average wage was 8 or 10 cents. I found girls at work in all the factories, and I know of none which does not employ children.

At present a considerable portion of the cotton used in China is imported from abroad. We have the bulk of the Manchurian trade, although Japan is doing its best to compete. The English sell the greater part of the goods brought in to the Yangtze valley and south China, and the Germans are pushing their cloths everywhere. Within the past year or so, however, the Chinese officials have been starting small factories in which hand looms are used. I saw some in Tientsin and other parts of Chihli, and I am told that there are more than 15,000 such looms now at work in that province.

### China's Cotton Supply.

China is doing all it can to improve its native cotton. The officials are sending out men to study our cotton belt and our methods of cotton raising and edicts have been issued to encourage the growth of the crop in all the provinces. It is claimed that cotton will do well in most parts of China. Much of the country lies in the latitude of our southern States, and from Shanghai northward there are rich plains which the experts say are fitted for cotton growing. With unscientific methods of cultivation the country is now producing something like 70 per cent of the raw material it uses, and if properly farmed, the crop could be enormously increased.

The native cotton is of a short staple. It is brought here in boats upon the Yangtze Kiang and its tributaries, and also in seagoing junks from Ningpo and the lands farther south. It is put up in bags of enormous size, but so loosely packed that one twice as large as a feather bed weighs only 200 pounds. It is loaded and unloaded by coolies who carry it upon their heads from the ships to the factory.

Other farmers ship their raw cotton in basketwork bales the size of a hoghead. The bales are opened in

the cotton yards and the lint is sometimes rebaled in packages of 500 pounds for export to the United States and Europe. The nature of the native cotton makes it especially good for underwear, and some of it is sent to the United States for that purpose.

### A Nation in Cotton.

Our cotton factories should send their agents here to study the market. These people dress in cotton instead of silk, and the most of the cloth used is spun and reeled by hand and woven at home. With the new civilization wages will rise and the Chinese will wear more cotton than ever before. At present it is safe to say that there are at least four hundred millions of them who dress in such goods all the year round. They wear only one or two thin garments in the summer, but in winter they have several suits well wadded to keep themselves warm, and in the northern provinces they put on suit after suit as the weather grows colder. Indeed, some fleshy Chinese in full winter dress have trouble in getting through their own doorways. But even at one suit of twenty yards to each person per year the amount of cotton used is so great that at least eight billion yards are required. This amount is beyond comprehension. It would carpet a pathway sixty feet wide from the earth to the moon, or cover one more than twenty miles wide from New York to Chicago. Our total shipments of cotton goods to other countries is less than thirty-three million dollars a year, and all we send to Asia sells for less than thirteen millions. That which goes to China would hardly patch the knees of the Celestials, let alone make their clothes.

### How American Oil Lights China.

If our cotton interests could handle this market as the Standard Oil does the exports from our Southern States might run into the hundreds of millions a year. The Standard Oil Company has its own agents in all the provinces, and it is pushing its business in every city. Twenty years ago the oil was shipped here in tin cans. It is now brought in tank steamers which carry 10,000 tons at a load. The vessels start from San Francisco and land at half a dozen different ports, where the oil is pumped out into great storage tanks. I found such tanks at Hankow, 600 miles up the Yangtze Kiang, and saw the steamers unloaded by means of a pump. The tanks there hold tens of thousands of barrels. They have factories connected with them, where the tin plate is made into five-gallon cans. These are filled with oil and are distributed by the Yangtze and its tributaries. The stuff is economically handled, being sold in smaller and smaller packages as it gets farther away from the ports, and in some places almost by the spoonful. The Standard Oil Company has tanks at Tientsin and Hongkong. It does by far the biggest oil business in China, although

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It is Unloaded by Coolies Who Carry it Upon Their Heads.